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Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

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Nuclear-weapon-free zones

Working paper submitted by the members of the Group of Non-Aligned States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

1. The Group of Non-Aligned States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons reaffirms that the Treaty recognizes the right of any group of States to conclude regional treaties in order to ensure the total absence of nuclear weapons in their respective territories, which the Group considers to be an important step towards strengthening nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regimes. The Group is, therefore, of the firm belief that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones is not a substitute for nuclear disarmament and the total elimination of nuclear weapons. In this regard, the Group underlines the importance of the early fulfilment of the legal obligations of and unequivocal undertakings by the nuclear-weapon States to eliminate all their nuclear weapons.

2. The Group of Non-Aligned States Parties to the Treaty welcomes the establishment of the nuclear-weapon-free zones created by the treaties of Tlatelolco (Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean), Rarotonga (South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty), Bangkok (Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone), Pelindaba (African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty) and Semipalatinsk (Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia) and considers them as positive steps and important measures towards attaining the objective of global nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. In this regard, the Group welcomes the efforts aimed at establishing other nuclear-weapon-free zones worldwide and calls for cooperation and broad consultation among the States of the regions concerned to conclude agreements establishing such zones.

3. In this context, the Group of Non-Aligned States Parties to the Treaty strongly supports the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and calls for the full implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, which is an integral and essential part of the package of decisions reached without a vote that enabled the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in 1995. The resolution remains valid until its objectives are achieved.

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Furthermore, the Group of Non-Aligned States Parties to the Treaty expresses its disappointment that, as a result of the opposition by Canada, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America at the concluding session of the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, consensus on measures regarding the process to establish a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction was not achieved.

4. The Group of Non-Aligned States Parties to the Treaty reiterates that, pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons and in order to strengthen the non-proliferation regime, it is the legitimate right of all non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the Treaty to receive effective, universal, unconditional, non-discriminatory, irrevocable and legally binding security assurances against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. The Group reaffirms that, in the context of the nuclear-weapon-free zones, it is also essential that all the nuclear-weapon States provide unconditional, non-discriminatory and concrete legal assurances against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons to all non-nuclear-weapon States of the zone that are parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. In this regard, the Group strongly calls for the withdrawal of any related reservations or unilateral interpretative declarations that are incompatible with the object and purpose of such treaties. The Group further calls upon the nuclear-weapon States to fulfil their obligations to achieve the objectives of the treaties to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones and their protocols.

5. The Group of Non-Aligned States Parties to the Treaty, while commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, emphasizes the need to strengthen the integrity of the statute of denuclearization provided for in that Treaty by reviewing the declarations that were formulated by the nuclear-weapon States parties to Additional Protocols I and II thereto, for possible withdrawal or modification.

6. The Group of Non-Aligned States Parties to the Treaty urges States to conclude agreements with a view to establishing new nuclear-weapon-free zones in regions where they do not exist, in accordance with the relevant paragraphs of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (see A/S-10/4) and the principles and guidelines adopted by the United Nations Disarmament Commission at its 1999 substantive session. In this context, the Group considers that the further institutionalization of the nuclear-weapon-free status of Mongolia would be an important step towards strengthening the non-proliferation regime in that region.

7. The Group of Non-Aligned States Parties to the Treaty, recalling the convening of the third Conference of the States Parties and Signatories to Treaties that Establish Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones and Mongolia, held in New York on 24 April 2015, calls upon the States parties and signatories to those treaties to put in place further forms of cooperation among themselves, their treaty agencies and other interested States.

8. The Group of Non-Aligned States Parties to the Treaty stresses the importance of the ratification by the nuclear-weapon States of the relevant protocols to the treaties of Pelindaba, Rarotonga, Semipalatinsk and Bangkok in order to ensure the total absence of nuclear weapons in the territories of the States parties to those treaties, as envisaged in article VII of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.